



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH  
1102 SE Quince Street • PO Box 47990  
Olympia, Washington 98504-7990

February 11, 2003

The Honorable Sandra Romero, Chair  
House Local Government Committee  
Post Office Box 40600  
Mod 1 Building, Room 106  
Olympia, Washington 98504-0600

Dear Representative Romero:

We are writing to you regarding House Bill 1068, regarding fluoridation of public water systems, scheduled to be heard before your committee on February 12, 2003. Our comments also pertain to House Bill 1646. The State Board of Health is not taking a position on either bill, but we want you to know that the Board is concerned about protecting the oral health of all children.

Dental caries or cavities is the most common childhood chronic illness, and in modern society is largely a disease of poor children. Fluoridation is known to be the most effective and most inexpensive intervention to prevent dental caries. Fluoride can be given to children on an individual as well as on a population basis, although research demonstrates that children who live in poverty are much less likely to receive fluoride at all. The State Board of Health is particularly concerned about the poor levels of access to children's oral health care. For that reason, the Board encourages the state to explore solutions that would include maintaining Medicaid and State Children's Health Insurance Plan (SCHIP) dental coverage to the degree possible and expanding the use of fluoridation as a population-based approach to preventing dental caries in people with limited access to oral health care.

Given budget realities, fluoridation is a population-based approach that is the most cost-effective.

We appreciate your attention.

Sincerely,

Linda Lake, Chair  
State Board of Health

Vickie Ybarra, RN, MPH, Chair  
State Board of Health Committee on Children's  
Health and Well-Being

cc: House Local Government Committee Members  
Representative Bill Campbell  
Representative Roger Bush  
Washington State Board of Health Members  
Ms. Mich'l Needham, Governor's Office of Health Policy  
Ms. Patty Hayes, Department of Health  
Mr. Don Sloma, Washington State Board of Health